GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3030
ANSWERED ON:20.12.2004
DISTRIBUTION POLICY
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Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the absence of uniform National Distribution Policy has led to the dichotomy of starving people along side the huge surplus stocks of foodgrains in FCI godowns;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether several experts have urged the Government to formulate a uniform National Foodgrains Distribution Policy; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR)

(a) & (b): The Government of India allocates foodgrains under the Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) to the States/UTs on a uniform basis @ 35 kgs. per household per month. The Government of India introduced the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) with focus on the poor to provide the foodgrains to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families at highly subsidized rates. The BPL households are determined on the basis of the population projection of the Registrar General of India as on 1.3.2000 and the State-wise poverty estimates of the Planning Commission for 1993-94. To ensure food security for all and to reform and improve the Public Distribution System for the benefit of the poorest of the poor from amongst the BPL families, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana was commenced in December, 2000 to provide food grains at highly subsidized rates of Rs.2/- per kg. for wheat and 3/- per kg. for rice. The Scheme which initially covered one crore poorest of the poor families has been expanded to cover 2.00 crore BPL families by including, inter-alia, all households at the risk of hunger.

The increasing trend of offtake of foodgrains under BPL in the last three years from 117.31 lakh tonnes in 2001-02 to 199.69 lakh tonnes in 2003-04 and the fact that the Central Issue Price (CIP) of foodgrains for BPL has been constant since July, 2002 indicate that TPDS is effective.

(c) & (d): At present, there is no proposal under consideration of the Government to formulate a uniform National Foodgrains Distribution Policy. Public Distribution System as it stood earlier, had been widely criticized for its failure to serve the population below the poverty line, its urban bias, limited coverage in the States with high concentration of the rural poor and lack of transparent and accountable arrangements for delivery. The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced in June 1997 with a view to target the under priviledged sections of the society i.e. families Below the Poverty Line who are being provided foodgrains at highly subsidized rates.